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DEPT FOR SES-O
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DCHA/OFDA FOR ROBERT THAYER
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ROME FOR FODAG
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KATHMANDU FOR USAID OFDA BILL BERGER AND SUE MCINTYRE
TREASURY FOR ELIZABETH WEISS AND SUSAN CHUN

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SUBJECT: USAID/OFDA Cyclone Sidr Situation Report #8: USAID/DART's Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Advisor Assesses Remote Cyclone-Affected Areas

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1. Summary. From November 28 to December 2, the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) advisor from USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART), along with a USAID/DART communications officer and staff from USAID/Bangladesh, traveled to cyclone-affected areas in Barisal, Patuakhali, Khulna, and Barguna districts. Through ongoing assessments, the USAID/DART is identifying potential gaps in relief efforts and opportunities for transition to recovery and rehabilitation phases of the response. The USAID/DART reports that the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) is meeting the most immediate food and water needs in central, more accessible areas. However, GOB and non-governmental organization (NGO) assistance is interspersed and less coordinated throughout more remote areas, such as communities along the Bhola River west of Sarankhola town, Khulna District and the coastal areas and islands south of the Kalapara/Patharghata parallel, which are accessible only by boat. Affected populations in these areas continue to require emergency relief commodities. The USAID/DART WASH advisor recommends focusing humanitarian assistance on remote populations with less access to relief and services. Immediate interventions should include more regular food distributions of higher quantities, continued water purification assistance, and provision of additional relief commodities including clothes and cooking utensils. The USAID/DART advisor recommends that medium-term assistance begins immediately and focuses on recovery assistance, such as seeds, tools, and

livelihood assets, cash availability to increase purchasing power, shelter assistance, and rehabilitation of WASH infrastructure. End summary.

USAID/DART COVERAGE OF CYCLONE-AFFECTED AREAS

¶2. From November 28 to December 2, the USAID/DART WASH Advisor and USAID/Bangladesh traveled to Muladee community north of Barisal town, Sarankhola town in Khulna District, Galachipa town in Patuakhali District, and a number of island and coastal areas south of 21030Q between Kalapara and Patharghata towns. [Note. These areas include Nashabara, Kalapara ferry crossing, S. Jalikari, Newpara, Taltoli, Bariatoli, Jalbhanga, Lotakota, Bainshamptru, Amtoli, Chonmoni, and Lakutola. End note]

USAID/DART OBSERVATIONS

¶3. In areas with humanitarian access, priority needs identified by GOB officials and affected populations include shelter; cash to increase purchasing power; livelihood assistance such as boat repair, productive asset restoration, and provision of seeds and tools; and provision of emergency relief commodities including clothes and cooking utensils. In more remote areas, which are accessible only by boat, GOB officials and affected communities have prioritized continued food distribution as an urgent need. Additionally, communities have identified the need for clean water through purification, rehabilitation of damaged water points, and cleaning of ponds. Finally, shelter, livelihoods interventions, incoming generating activities, and the distribution of emergency relief commodities can help meet immediate needs.

¶4. The USAID/DART reported that the GOB is effectively providing

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food distributions during the emergency phase. Populations in most areas the USAID/DART visited have received a minimum of 3 to 5 kilograms of rice. NGOs are providing rations, such as oil, pulses, sugar, and salt, that complement the GOB program. However, this assistance has not covered all affected areas. The GOB plans to continue providing rice distributions until March. In addition, the GOB has announced its Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) program, pledging approximately 2.8 million cards, where each family will receive one card. As of December 1, a limited number of people reportedly have received cards. Given the logistical challenges of delivering food commodities to remote areas, it remains uncertain how effective and widespread the VGF program will be. In some areas, the VGF program is scheduled to deliver food to less than 30 percent of the population. Although NGOs have filled many gaps, coordination remains a humanitarian challenge particularly in remote areas. GOB officials suggest the need to fill additional gaps, especially in logistics. The USAID/DART reported that although food distributions throughout affected areas remain uneven and uncoordinated, there have been no reports of acute malnutrition due to food scarcity.

¶5. In large towns and other accessible locations, the GOB is ensuring clean water, principally with water purification units. In Sarankhola Upazilla, Cyclone Sidr damaged 113 out of 215 Pond Sand Filtration (PSF) systems, which are designed to treat pond water. Six water purification units, half of which are mobile, are currently satisfying humanitarian water needs. In the medium term, the USAID/DART advisor recommends repairing the PSF systems.

¶6. In more remote areas, the GOB and the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) have provided water purification tablets. On the islands and coastal areas of Galachipa Upazilla, as well as the islands south of the Kalapara/Patharghata parallel, reports suggest damage to more than 615 tube wells, or approximately 50 percent of existing wells. Additionally, the impact of the cyclone led to contaminated open ponds previously used for water consumption. Along the Bhola River to the west of Sarankhola, the GOB suggests significant water needs. Throughout these areas, residents are purifying river water

or contaminated pond water with the tablets. The GOB has not yet reported outbreaks of water-borne diseases; however, health risks will inevitably increase without additional distribution of purification tablets along with water point rehabilitation and cleaning.

¶17. Although a local GOB official suggested that the impact of the cyclone damaged nearly 13,000 latrines, USAID/DART assessments are not consistent with this figure. Many latrines were indeed washed away by the cyclone; however, latrine coverage prior to the cyclone was not robust. On the peninsula south and southwest of Barguna town, many temporary settlements of 10,000 to 15,000 people reside along the roadside to wait for water logging to reside. In addition, these populations fear that assistance will not reach them off of the main road. NGOs are currently providing food, water, and minimal latrine coverage, but are encouraging people to move back to home villages without delay.

¶18. Other than rice distributions and cash pledges, the USAID/DART has witnessed limited GOB deliveries of relief commodities in the field. NGOs have strategically distributed water containers throughout cyclone-affected areas; however, aid agencies have

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attempted to meet other needs, such as clothes and cooking utensils, in a more ad hoc fashion. Even though goods from neighboring districts are pouring into markets, purchasing power remains limited for poorer households.

¶19. The USAID/DART reported protection issues, especially in temporary camps and settlements where humanitarian sanitation infrastructure is limited. Additionally, in many areas, people do not have sufficient articles of clothing. At these locations, women are forced to bathe at night, thereby raising protection concerns.

USAID/DART RECOMMENDATIONS

¶10. Continued food assistance from international donors should be coordinated and should target remote, inaccessible areas. The USAID/DART recommends focusing logistical support to ensure food delivery to isolated, outlying areas. In addition, the mainstreaming of one month food rations could reduce logistical costs.

¶11. Continued WASH assessments should focus on remote areas. Short-term assistance should ensure adequate water purification mechanisms, such as provision of clean water in central areas as well as distribution of water purification tablets in remote areas where drinking ponds are contaminated, water infrastructure is damaged, and people are drinking river water. Medium-term water assistance should include rehabilitation of damaged WASH infrastructure and cleaning of ponds.

¶12. Cash distributions and cash-for-work can be considered to assist people in addressing needs such as shelter, livelihoods, and emergency relief goods. The USAID/DART livelihoods advisor will elaborate further on appropriate livelihoods interventions [see septel].

¶13. The USAID/DART recommends continued attention on protection issues.

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